



# DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

## INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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PHOTOS available from Fish and Wildlife Service

### SNOWMOBILE CARRIES REFUGE MANAGER OVER DRIFTS IN WORK ON RARE SWANS

Thanks to an odd-looking contraption that is a cross between an automobile, a sled, and a tank, Archie V. Hull, manager of the Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge in northwestern Montana, can travel over deep winter snows with the ease of a motorist on a concrete road in summer.

According to a Fish and Wildlife Service report to Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes, the snowmobile is important to Manager Hull in his work on the rare trumpeter swans that winter on open spring heads about 12 miles from the refuge headquarters. Only 190 trumpeter swans are left in the United States, according to a recent count, which revealed that 128 of the birds were on the Red Rock Lakes Refuge.

Refuge personnel have traveled more than 4,000 miles over drifts 8 to 10 feet deep since the snowmobile was purchased in 1939. Deep snows usually are present in the section from November through March.

During the spring break-up, when both deep snow and bare ground must be covered, the snowmobile is particularly desirable, the manager said.

At the rear of the snowmobile is a steel caterpillar belt 7 feet long and 14 inches wide, which runs over two center idler wheels. Steel skis in front serve to guide the car over snow drifts and keep it from bogging down.

The skis and front wheels are mounted on an eccentric axle which permits the snowmobile operator to raise one or the other, depending on the ground to be covered.

Average speed of the machine over snow is 15 miles an hour, though it can attain 25 to 30 miles an hour if necessary.

The snowmobile serves not only in work on the trumpeter swans but it also is of general usefulness as a means of bringing supplies in from the towns of Menida and Dillon. With a regular car, it requires 3 days to make a round trip in winter to Dillon, 70 miles from the refuge. With the snowmobile the trip can be made in 1 day.

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